

Message Text

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R 101346Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9808

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS PRETORIA 1988

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOCI, SF, UK, XA

SUBJECT: BRITISH LIONS RUGBY TEAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. INORDINATE AMOUNT OF ENTHUSIASTIC PRESS COVERAGE GIVEN TO ARRIVAL OF BRITISH LIONS RUGBY TEAM IN SOUTH AFRICA AND TO TEAM'S ACTIVITIES EVEN BEFORE FIRST MATCH HAS BEEN PLAYED UNDERLINE GREAT IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO SPORTS, ESPECIALLY TO INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, BY SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC. IT NOTE WORTHY THAT SOUTH AFRICAN AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH- LANGUAGE NEWS-PAPERS. WHICH GENERALLY MUTUALLY ANTAGONISTIC ON POLITICAL ISSUES, UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT FOR LIONS TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA AND IN OPPOSITION TO ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT IN UK WHICH TRIED TO PREVENT LIONS FROM COMING.

2. LATEST DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING LIONS IS THAT BRITISH EMBASSY HERE HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED BY LONDON NOT RPT NOT TO ENTERTAIN OR HAVE OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH MEMBERS OF LIONS TEAM. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY BY SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION MAY 9, UK AMBASSADOR SIR JAMES BOTTOMLEY CONFIRMED HE HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTION AND SAID EMBASSY WOULD COMPLY WITH IT.
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BOTTOMLEY QUOTED BY RAND DAILY MAIL MAY 10 AS SAYING,

" THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MADE CLEAR WHEN IT TOOK OFFICE EARLY
IN MARCH THAT IT WAS OPPOSED TO THE LIONS TOUR."

3. COMMENT: REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER PROBLEMS LIONS TOU MAY CAUSE
HMG, GENERAL REACTION BY SOUTH AFRICAS IS THAT SOUTH AFRICA
WON VICTORY OF SORTS BECAUSE LIONS RESISTED PRESSURES
NOT RPT NOT TO COME HERE. HOWEVER, IN LONG RUN THIS " VICTORY"
COULD BE TO SOUTH AFRICA'S DISADVANTAGE, AS SOME
THOUGHTFUL SOUTH AFRICANS MAY REALIZE. AS WE HAVE ALREADY
SEEN, KENYA HAS ANNOUNCED IT WILL BOYCOTT ALL SPORTING EVENTS
WITH BRITAIN BECAUSE OF LIONS TOUR (NAIROBI 3722). AND IT
CERTAIN THAT OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL FOLLOW SUIT. THIS
SHOULD INCREASE PRESSURES ELSEWHERE FOR SPORTS TEAMS TO
AVOID COMPETING IN SOUTH AFRICA. PERHAPS THIS IN TURN WILL
STIMULATE EVEN FURTHER MODIFICATION BY SAG OF ITS SPORTS POLICY.
HOWEVER, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT NOTHING SHORT OF COMPLETE
INTEGRATION OF SPORTS DOWN TO CLUB LEVEL WILL SATISFY AFRICAN
CRITICS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S SEGREGATED SPORTS. AND IT REMAINS
AN OPEN QUESTION HOW FAR SAG WILLING TO GO TOWARD INTEGRATING
SPORTS ACTIVITIES.
HURD

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